



News From

Maggie Brooks

Monroe County Executive

For Immediate Release

Tuesday, November 9, 2010

BROOKS UNVEILS 2011 BUDGET: HOLDS THE LINE ON PROPERTY TAXES, NO CUTS TO SERVICES

*Seventh Consecutive Balanced Budget Embraces Fiscal Discipline; Holds
Property Tax Rate Flat, Shrinks Government without Cutting Services*

Building on a legacy of fiscally responsible leadership at a time when local taxpayers need it most, County Executive **Maggie Brooks** today presented her proposed Budget for 2011. The County Executive's 2011 Operating Budget, totaling \$931.7 million, keeps the property tax rate flat, holds discretionary spending below the rate of inflation, and reduces the size of County government, all while responsibly funding quality-of-life services for the coming year.

*"The seventh budget I've presented since taking office as County Executive comes during a period of great economic challenge for families and businesses in our community, and those like it across Upstate New York," said **Brooks**. "That's why, for the seventh consecutive year, I take great pride in delivering a fiscally responsible budget that doesn't increase the property tax rate. Since New York State now owns the highest tax burden in the entire nation, holding the line on property taxes to protect overburdened local taxpayers continues to be job number one."*

No Property Tax Increase

For the seventh straight year, **Brooks** has honored her commitment to taxpayers by proposing stable property taxes. The 2011 Budget preserves the reduced property tax rate set in 2008 and maintained over the last two years in the face of unprecedented economic crisis, holding it flat at \$8.99 per \$1,000 of assessed value. In fact, the County property tax rate is lower now than when **Brooks** took office.

Monroe is among only 4 of New York State's 62 constituent counties to have not raised its property tax rate since 2004. Of its five most comparable peer counties – Erie, Nassau, Onondaga, Suffolk, and Westchester – Monroe stands alone as the only to have not raised its property tax rate over that time.

*"Taxpayers have responded to economic challenge with calls for less government, more accountability, and fiscal discipline. The 2011 Monroe County Budget is our message to those taxpayers that we hear you loud and clear: your interests come first," said **Brooks**. "By holding the line on property taxes, we've given local property taxpayers the freedom to spend their hard-earned money in our community, not on*

higher taxes. A flat tax rate also lays the groundwork for local businesses to be able to create jobs and keep our economy moving forward on the path to prosperity.”

Spending Held Below Rate of Inflation; Complies with Taxpayer Protection Act

Through a combination of strict cost controls and continued streamlining of County services, the 2011 Budget holds non-mandated spending – or the spending that the County can control on a local level – below the rate of inflation.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI), an indicator used to determine changes in the rate of inflation, is currently 1.1%. As exploding pension costs and other State Mandates crush many local governments, the 2011 Budget manages to hold non-mandated spending to an increase of only 0.9%. As a result, the budget is in compliance with the Taxpayer Protection Act of 2007, which requires annual increases in discretionary spending to be no greater than the rate of inflation.

*“Through strict cost controls, we are holding non-mandated spending below the rate of inflation,” continued **Brooks**. “As both our State and Federal governments continue to increase spending to unsustainable and fiscally-damaging levels, Monroe County has redoubled its commitment to protecting local taxpayers. For 2011 we’ve held locally controlled spending essentially flat, changing by less than one percent.”*

No Reductions to Quality-of-Life Services

The 2011 Monroe County Budget responsibly maintains vital quality-of-life services, including the areas of parks and public safety.

*“No matter what fiscal challenges we face year-in and year-out, a top responsibility for County government is to maintain a high quality of life for our residents,” said **Brooks**. “Monroe County is fortunate to boast a nation-wide reputation of having a quality of life that is second-to-none. That’s why we took great pains to ensure the 2011 County Budget maintains the same high-quality, vital services that help to make our community the greatest place in the nation to live, work, and raise a family.”*

Reducing the Size of County Government

In answering overburdened taxpayers’ calls for fiscal discipline, Brooks has re-doubled her commitment to reducing the size of local government. The County will support 114.5 fewer full-time-equivalent positions in 2011, resulting in the estimated savings of \$6.7 million. That includes 47 employees opting into Early Retirement, 55.5 positions eliminated through attrition, and 12 layoffs. Layoffs will occur in the Departments of Human Services and Environmental Services, and at Monroe Community Hospital.

*“Reining in spending and embracing fiscal responsibility is the cornerstone in our strong record of property tax stability,” continued **Brooks**. “By tightening our fiscal*

belt and always looking for efficiencies, Monroe County has been able to shrink the size of County government by over 340 positions since 2005.”

Bridging the Gap to a Balanced Budget

Like most local governments across New York State, Monroe County is facing a structural resource gap for 2011, as increasing mandated costs outpace the growth of local revenues. While most governments turn to tax hikes or basic service cuts to close a resource gap, the 2011 Budget averts both by utilizing several innovative means to overcome the State’s shifting of costs to counties.

The County will continue to benefit from an increase in federal reimbursements for Medicaid, known as FMAP funding, in the amount of \$11 million. Additionally, \$16 million is expected from the sale of property tax liens. The 2011 Budget reduces under-utilized and non-essential County infrastructure by calling for the sale of the vacant Gateway and Edwards Buildings, which will generate an estimated \$2 million.

There are also select fee adjustments which will generate an estimated \$3.3 million. They include: a 911 cell-carrier surcharge; adjusted rates for reservations at County Parks and admission to the Seneca Park Zoo; and adjustments to fees for the filing of certain real estate documents. Monroe is one of only 6 counties in the State to have not adopted state authorized adjustments for filing fees in recent years.

These revenue enhancements, in combination with personnel reductions amounting to \$6.7 million and departmental efficiencies totaling \$7 million, enabled Monroe County to close a staggering \$46 million structural resource gap for 2011.

“Responsible revenue enhancements have helped to close our community’s structural resource gap without placing any additional burden on property taxpayers,” said **Brooks**. *“There’s no question that’s the right approach during tough economic times.”*

Medicaid Swap Continues Long-Term Success

Brooks’ innovative decision to adopt the Medicaid Swap as the method of funding Monroe County’s local share of the Medicaid Program continues to yield enormous savings. As a direct result of the 2007 decision, Monroe County is budgeted to save \$13.8 million in the coming year. For the period 2008 through 2011, the Swap is projected to achieve nearly \$40 million in cumulative savings. Monroe was the only county in the State to opt into the Medicaid Swap Program.

“Monroe County has long been considered a State-wide leader in the development of innovative, proactive ways to protect local taxpayers,” continued **Brooks**. *“The \$40 million savings that we will achieve through the Swap is likely the make-or-break factor in our ability to overcome State mandates and produce a balanced budget for 2011.”*

Leading the Fight for Mandate Reform

The single largest portion of the 2011 Budget, mandated spending, accounts for a staggering 82 percent of Monroe County's total spending for the coming year.

*"Recently, the New York State Association of Counties reported that nine programs mandated by New York State account for 90% of the average County's total tax levy – leaving no question as to why Upstate New York is saddled with one of the highest property tax burdens in the nation," stated **Brooks**. "That's why I will continue to fight for greater control over how our local tax dollars are spent, while also working with both public and private partners to keep protecting local taxpayers."*

Averting Crisis at the County Level

Brooks' 2011 Budget successfully overcomes a shortfall resulting from exploding pension costs and other state mandates, but many New York counties have been unable to avoid crushing challenges in 2011. After years of State mismanagement being shifted to local governments, those counties are now being forced to adopt drastic solutions.

Examples include: Multiple counties with coming-year property tax rate hikes, some in excess of 50%; furloughs for government workers; closing parks and libraries; and massive layoffs, some amounting to more than 20% of a county's workforce.

*"As county governments across New York State find drastic solutions to balance their budgets in the face of crushing State mandates, I am proud that the 2011 Monroe County Budget provides stability for our community," concluded **Brooks**. "Years of fiscal restraint and responsible budgeting have allowed us to develop a 2011 Budget that puts taxpayers first without cutting any vital quality-of-life services that residents expect and deserve."*

###

*Media Inquiries, contact:
Department of Communications at 753-1080*